



OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State Capitol, Fifth Floor
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Phone: (808)586-0255
Fax: (808)586-0231
email: ltgov@hawaii.gov
www.hawaii.gov/ltgov

JAMES R. AIONA, JR.
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Statement of
JAMES R. AIONA, JR.
Lieutenant Governor
State of Hawaii

Before the

U. S. House Committee on Government Reform
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources
“The Poisoning of Paradise: Crystal Methamphetamine in Hawaii”

Chairman Souder and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to testify on the pervasive problem of substance abuse in Hawaii.

For many people, Hawaii conjures up images of a tropical paradise with pristine beaches, beautiful flowers, and warm, friendly people. While the beauty of our State is indisputable, we are not immune to the devastation caused by the use and abuse of illegal substances.

Crystal methamphetamine or “ice” is the most abused illicit drug in the State of Hawaii, and Hawaii tops the nation in ice use. Hawaii users prefer the higher purity of imported smokable ice. This highly addictive, intense stimulant has reached epidemic proportions with devastating impact on families, communities, and the fabric of life in the islands. Its effects are seen in increased drug arrests, treatment admissions, child abuse reports, domestic violence, prison admissions, and health care costs. Ice and other illicit substances pose a tremendous burden on our economy with increasing challenges for federal, state, and local government, and most importantly, on our communities.

You will hear representatives from the law enforcement community testifying about the quantities of drugs seized, and the number of people arrested for drug-related crimes. You will also hear about the relationship between substance abuse and the State’s inordinately high property crime rate and the relationship between substance abuse and violence. Mr. Keith Kamita of the Department of Public Safety’s Narcotics Enforcement Division will brief you on Hawaii’s experience with clandestine drug laboratories. Moreover, you will hear about the substantial disruption that substance abuse has on our families, communities, and the workplace.

Although attempts have been made to address the problem, all too often organizations worked within their own boundaries. Despite the best efforts of the individual entities, the abuse of illegal substances, in particular crystal methamphetamine, escalated.

To draw on the wisdom of our citizens, I have listened to their concerns and ideas during 13 community forums held throughout the State last summer, during a September 2003 youth summit held in collaboration with Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii, and the Department of Health, and at the first statewide drug summit in September 2003.

Family breakdown and family violence, drug houses, and drug dealing were identified as primary concerns for communities. These same communities believed that more organized youth activities and community action groups were necessary to reduce illicit substance use and underage drinking. Youth summit participants echoed similar preventive measures: implement more youth activities in the community and schools, develop recreational centers, and create a cutting-edge media campaign aimed at youth.

What else can we in Hawaii do to change the drug statistics and lives of families devastated by substance abuse?

Participants at the drug summit unequivocally called for better coordination in the delivery of services in order to avoid duplication and to maximize resources. To address the problem in its totality, partnerships, including federal partnerships, are critical. Most importantly, the drug summit attendees felt that communities must be equal partners in designing, developing, and deciding on strategies.

Because no community has all the answers, however, we often look to our federal partners for direction, guidance, and resources. One example of a successful partnership between Hawaii and the federal government is the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program, which has mobilized county, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to collectively disrupt the distribution of drugs into, within, and out of Hawaii. Another welcome partner is the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), whose vision of “a life in the community for everyone” is being fulfilled by building resilience and facilitating recovery.

We concur with SAMHSA’s direction of engaging in immediate and long-term strategies to address the highly complex issues surrounding substance and alcohol abuse. With assistance from SAMHSA, the State is currently undergoing an action planning process with key partners to focus on issues surrounding prevention, treatment, community mobilization, legal changes, and collaboration. It is intended that the plan, which will guide our efforts in the years to come, be flexible and ever-evolving to be responsive to various circumstances and opportunities.

I commend the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources for focusing attention on this problem and for venturing across the continent to hear about Hawaii’s experience. I appreciate the opportunity to provide a brief overview of the approach that the State is taking to ensure the health and safety of the citizens of Hawaii. As we seek a comprehensive yet balanced approach to dealing with not only crystal methamphetamine but all illegal substances and underage drinking, we look forward to working collaboratively with our federal partners.